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The C.I.A. in Singapore

The face of the Central Intelligence Agency, that super-secret arm of the government, is red again. The prime minister of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew, charged angrily this week that an American CIA agent had been arrested in 1961 for trying to buy state secrets. Mr. Lee also said he demanded \$33 million in foreign aid in return for his government's silence and the release of the agent, but that he was offered only \$3 million. The prime minister said he turned it down as an "insult."

This may sound like the outline of a scenario for Hollywood, a blend of comic opera and James Bond. But alas, after an initial denial in Washington, the embarrassed State Department concedes the whole thing really happened.

Mr. Lee's motives in making the disclosure so belatedly are not clear. He probably has been under mounting pressure to exhibit his nationalism since Singapore was severed last month from the Malaysian Federation.

Because Mr. Lee has been strongly anti-Communist, and because of the obvious need of Singapore to retain the big British military base, it does not appear that the prime minister is about

to embark on an anti-American campaign.

The incident, nevertheless, is disturbing to the White House and Congress. President Kennedy had shown his displeasure at the role of the CIA in the celebrated Bay of Pigs affair, and he subsequently cracked down on the agency's free-wheeling.

The CIA, which has spent billions of dollars with very little accounting, has been accused in recent years of trying to make or influence foreign policy, instead of sticking to its original basic job of collecting and evaluating spy data.

But the CIA seems to have friends in high places. It seems likely that the holding of closed hearings on the Singapore affair next week as planned by Rep. Clement Zablocki (D-Wis.), chairman of a Foreign Affairs subcommittee, will only ruffle a few feathers. Mr. Zablocki has often urged the creation of a special congressional committee to keep a sharper eye on the CIA's workings.

The Singapore affair—with all due regard for the need of all intelligence agents to bribe and to buy information on occasion, nevertheless does little to allay the uneasiness of many Americans about the work of the CIA.

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